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SUBJECT: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ESTABLISHES COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO
BORDER DISPUTE WITH ANGOLA

REF: A. Kinshasa 318 B. Kinshasa 275

¶1. (U) Summary: The DRC National Assembly voted unanimously March 19 to establish a commission of inquiry into a disputed border area with Angola. The 15-member commission will be chaired by a deputy from the opposition and assisted by experts from key ministries. The Assembly charged the commission with investigating the location of boundary markers and assessing the humanitarian situation in the region, and asked it to report in 10 days. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Political fallout from the border dispute between the DRC and Angola marked the March 19 National Assembly session. The dispute was the subject of a high-level meeting March 13 in Kinshasa at which ministers from both governments agreed the area in question, located near the Congolese territory of Kahemba in Bandundu province, was in fact on the Angolan side of the border (ref A). It was one of two items on the Assembly's calendar, but the session closed without considering the second, the proposed agenda for the 90-day session.

¶3. (U) The dispute has strongly divided deputies of both camps, and nationalist sentiment was the order of the day during the long debate, which was punctuated by some inflammatory invective. Following speeches from representatives of each of its twelve political groups, the Assembly agreed that:

- The issue is "very serious," and "a matter of dignity, justice and territorial integrity;"
- All legal means, including international conventions, should be used to settle the dispute;
- The government has done nothing to clarify the issue;
- It was premature for Interior Minister Denis Kalume to say "not a single centimeter of Congolese territory has been taken by Angola;"
- Prime Minister Gizenga and the ministers of defense, interior and foreign affairs should clarify the situation; and
- The Assembly should set up a special commission of inquiry on the question.

¶4. (SBU) The Assembly agreed that the commission would have fifteen members (nine majority, six opposition), that its president, second vice-president and deputy spokesman come from the opposition and its first vice president and spokesman from the majority, and that it would be assisted by experts from the prime ministry and the ministries of interior, foreign affairs, defense and humanitarian affairs. A member of the Assembly's executive committee told us March 21 that opposition parties had selected as the commission's president former trade minister Roger Lumbala (RCD-N) of Kasai Oriental, whose mandate was recently restored by the Supreme Court (ref B).

¶5. (SBU) Comment: The commission is scheduled to depart for the border March 21. Opposition politicians are eager to use the issue

to criticize the government, but the decision to have the commission of investigation headed by an opposition member will help keep partisanship in check. In any case, with the Congolese already acknowledging they were in error on the border dispute, the commission's eventual "findings" are virtually a foregone conclusion. End comment.

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